

DEATHS

NOTE: On July 1, 2008 Vermont implemented a revised death certificate based on the 2003 Revision of the U.S. Standard Certificate of Death. The revised certificate includes a few changes in what is reported to the Vermont Department of Health; therefore, some tables in this report were modified, and explanations are provided in footnotes.

There were 5,195 resident deaths in 2008, 36 more than in 2007. The crude death rate increased from 8.3 to 8.4 per 1,000 population. The death rate has fluctuated between 8.1 and 8.5 since 1988; prior to then it had been slowly declining from 11.2 in 1960, to 10.0 in 1970, down to 9.0 in 1980. The Vermont crude death rate was slightly higher than the U.S. white crude death rate until 1970 when the rates converged and remained similar through 1980. Since 1981, Vermont's death rate has been slightly lower than the U.S. white rate. The U.S. white rate for 2007 was 8.5 (2008 data not yet available). Comparisons are made to the U.S. white rate because 99.0 percent of Vermont residents who died in 2008 were white ([Table C-9](#)).

For the past 40 years, the two leading causes of death in Vermont have been heart disease and cancer, respectively. However, in 2007 cancer became the leading cause of death among Vermonters, and remained the leading cause in 2008. Cancer and heart disease accounted for 47.8 percent of the deaths in 2008 ([Table C-11](#)). The crude death rate for cancer (malignant neoplasms) rose steadily through the 1980's and 1990's before starting to decline in this decade. After a high of 204.0 per 100,000 population in 2001, the rate decreased to 194.1 in 2006 before increasing to 215.7 in 2007 and 205.2 in 2008. In contrast, the heart disease crude death rate peaked in the 1960's at 439.5 deaths per 100,000 population, but has decreased significantly since then. The rate for 2008 was 194.4 per 100,000 ([Table C-1](#)).

Chronic lower respiratory diseases (formerly referred to as chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases), the fourth leading cause of death in Vermont since 1985, moved up to the third leading cause in 2005. The crude death rate for this cause increased over the past twenty plus years from 33.0 in the period from 1979 to 1981 to 50.9 in 2000. After a slight decrease in 2001, the rate has gone up, then down each year since. In 2008, the rate was 55.2 per 100,000 population.

Accidents (or unintentional injuries) maintained its position as the fourth leading cause of death in Vermont, after moving up from the fifth leading cause in 2005. The crude death rate for accidents peaked at 58.4 in the period from 1969 to 1971, and declined to 31.3 in 1994 to 1996. Since the mid 1990's however, the death rate from accidents has increased. The crude rate for 2008 was 49.1.

Cerebrovascular diseases, or stroke, dropped from the third leading cause of death in 2004 to the fifth leading cause beginning in 2005. The crude death rate for cerebrovascular diseases has dropped significantly from its peak of 131.9 in the early 1960's to 44.7 in 2008.

The crude death rate from Alzheimer's disease steadily increased throughout the 1990's and into this decade, resulting in movement up from the tenth to the seventh leading cause of death in 1999. In 2004, Alzheimer's disease moved up to the sixth leading cause of death, and has remained there through 2008. The crude death rate for Alzheimer's disease in 2008 was 35.4.

Diabetes remained the seventh leading cause of death in Vermont in 2008. Though the rate has fluctuated in recent years; generally, Vermont has experienced an increasing trend in the crude death rate for diabetes over the past fifteen years. The rate increased from 22.0 in the period 1989 to 1991 to 26.9 in 2000 and 29.6 in 2003, before declining to 24.0 in 2004, increasing to 27.4 in 2007, and declining to 24.1 in 2008.

Intentional self-harm (or suicide) remained the eighth leading cause of death in 2008 and continued the recent trend of increasing crude death rates with a rate of 15.1 per 100,000. This is up from 14.2 in 2007, 13.1 in 2006 and 12.0 deaths per 100,000 in 2005.

Influenza and pneumonia remained in the ninth position in 2008, after dropping from eighth in 2006, with a crude death rate of 11.8 deaths per 100,000. This is a slight increase from 11.1 in 2007, following decreases from 12.2 in 2006 and 15.6 in 2005.

Parkinson's disease remained the tenth leading cause of death in Vermont in 2008, with a crude rate of 8.5 deaths per 100,000 population.

The leading causes of death varied with age ([Table C-2](#)) and ([Table C-14](#)). Unintentional injuries were the leading cause of death for people age 15 to 34. Cancer was the leading cause of death, followed by heart disease for 35-74 year olds, and at ages 75 and higher, the causes were reversed with heart disease as the leading cause, followed by cancer.

Death rates dramatically increase after age 75. While people age 75 and over comprised only 6.6 percent of the total population, they accounted for 61.3 percent of total deaths. Except for accidents and influenza and pneumonia, the leading causes of death in this age group were all chronic diseases.

The leading causes of death varied by sex as well ([Table C-1](#)) and ([Table C-11](#)). The top three causes for males were: cancer, heart disease and accidents. For females they were: cancer, heart disease, and stroke.

Chronic lower respiratory diseases, cerebrovascular diseases and diabetes ranked fourth, fifth, and sixth for males, while chronic lower respiratory diseases, Alzheimer's disease, and accidents were the fourth, fifth, and sixth leading causes of death for females.

Suicide and Alzheimer's disease were the seventh and eighth leading cause of death among males, while diabetes and influenza and pneumonia were ranked seventh and eighth for females.

Parkinson's disease and influenza and pneumonia were the ninth and tenth leading causes for males, and suicide and Parkinson's disease were ranked ninth and tenth among females.

Deaths occurring in a hospital accounted for 38.2 percent of Vermont resident deaths ([Table C-17](#)), down from 62 percent in 1980, 53 percent in 1990 and 41.2 percent in 2000. In 2008, 28.1 percent of Vermont resident deaths occurred at home, and 27.9 percent occurred in a nursing home.